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*Governor*



**KARYN POLITO**  
*Lt. Governor*

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## **Baker-Polito Administration Strengthens Supports and Interventions for Youth Survivors of Commercial Sex Exploitation**

*\$1.5 million federal grant will support community-based prevention strategies across the Commonwealth*

**BOSTON** – The Baker-Polito Administration is strengthening supports for survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation through a new \$1.5 million federal grant from the United States Department of Justice. Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito announced the grant today at an event at the Massachusetts Children's Alliance where she was joined by Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, Public Safety and Security Undersecretary Terrence Reidy, members of the law enforcement community, members of the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, and local organizations who support victims of human trafficking and exploitation.

"Under the leadership of Lt. Governor Polito, the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence has worked to improve protections for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "This work has resulted in substantial progress to enhance supports for individuals and families affected by sexual assault and domestic violence and hold perpetrators accountable."

"I am proud of the work the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence contributed to this important grant, which complements the Baker-Polito Administration's steadfast commitment to better identify and prosecute human traffickers and support the brave survivors," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "This funding provides additional support to organizations on the front lines who are making a difference in the lives of survivors by enhancing community programs, increasing the capacity of the law enforcement community to hold offenders accountable, and continuing to protect at-risk communities."

The Executive Offices of Health and Human Services and Public Safety and Security are partnering with law enforcement and community organizations to continue to build the Commonwealth's statewide, integrated approach to combatting human trafficking and exploitation by:

- **Piloting a dedicated prosecutorial High Risk Victims Unit** within the Worcester and Hampden County District Attorneys' offices tasked with proactively investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking involving children and youth in identified high-risk areas.
- **Ensuring appropriate placement for child and youth trafficking survivors** utilizing grant funds. The Department of Children and Families will increase the number of trained foster care placements for youth victims, and will educate and support DCF staff and foster care staff on relevant issues. Partner organizations My Life My Choice and Roxbury Youthworks will provide training to DCF and Intensive Foster Care (IFC) provider staff on commercial sexual exploitation education and support, and will provide technical assistance to DCF, IFC providers, and families. Living in Freedom Together and the EVA Center will provide technical assistance and support to DCF specifically on the needs of transition-age youth, ages 18 and over.
- **Supporting coordination of human trafficking intervention efforts between law enforcement and human service agencies:** EOPSS and the Massachusetts Children's Alliance will hire staff to support cross-sector coordination of human trafficking intervention efforts, at both the state and local level. Grant efforts will be aligned with existing county-based multidisciplinary teams focused on commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- **Providing mentoring opportunities and training to improve outcomes for child and youth survivors of sex and/or labor trafficking.** Specialized training will be provided to law enforcement by the Municipal Police Training Committee on identifying at-risk youth. In addition to the grant, the Baker-Polito Administration is funding \$500,000 towards expanding statewide mentoring opportunities and other interpersonal supports for survivors through EOHHS' Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) which aims to reduce youth and community violence in high-risk cities.

"Our work to prevent and address human trafficking cannot be done effectively without the voices of survivors informing our interventions throughout the state," **said Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders**. "The grant builds on our existing strong partnerships between the law enforcement community and human services organizations who directly support and employ survivors."

"This partnership reflects a multidisciplinary approach to tackling the commercial sexual exploitation of children," **said Public Safety Secretary Thomas Turco**. "It brings investigators, prosecutors, victim advocates, and service providers together with the goal of holding sex traffickers accountable while providing appropriate housing and tailored programming to best serve young survivors. This kind of coordination across agencies is key to sharing information, strategies, and resources effectively."

"The commitment of this administration to commercially sexually exploited youth is unprecedented. Securing this grant allows us to build on the foundational work of our Children's Advocacy Centers and ensures that a highly vulnerable group will have access to services; empowering child victims of abuse

to become survivors, and better yet, survivors who can thrive," **said Thomas M. King, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Children's Alliance.**

"We are thrilled to be partnering with the Commonwealth on this important grant. This grant builds on the strength of the work that has been done in Massachusetts, creating enhanced safety nets and supports. Working across sectors and state agencies will only increase the impact and sustainability of this work," **said Lisa Goldblatt Grace, Co-Founder & Executive Director of My Life My Choice.**

"We at LIFT are looking forward to expanding partnerships with policy makers, prosecutors, law enforcement, and social service providers. We commend Lt. Governor Polito's efforts to ensure that survivors are informing policy, strategies, and are represented at decision making tables across the Commonwealth as we work together to end human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Listening to survivors is an important first step in ending the exploitation of vulnerable people in our community and we are looking forward to working together to create a comprehensive community based approach," **said Nikki Bell, Founder and CEO of Living in Freedom Together.**

"Roxbury Youthworks, Inc. is excited to work with our collaborative partners in identifying and addressing the needs of an often overlooked population: cisgender males, transgender and gender nonconforming youth that have been victims of commercial sexual exploitation," **said Mia Alvarado, Executive Director of Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.**

"This is an exciting and much needed initiative as over half of the women that come through our programs at the EVA Center reported to have aged out of systems, specifically residential programs, with no family support or preparation for life. This grant will help to address our most vulnerable population of women and girls," **said Cherie Jiminez, Founder and Director of the EVA Center.**

The Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence was launched in April 2015 to advise Governor Baker on how to help residents of the Commonwealth live a life free of sexual assault and domestic violence by improving prevention for all, enhancing support for individuals and families affected by sexual assault and domestic violence, and insisting on accountability for perpetrators. The Council is chaired by Lt. Governor Polito and consists of up to 30 individuals appointees and more than 80 work group members. Council members represent advocacy organizations, direct service providers, criminal justice agencies, and reflect the state's geographic and cultural diversity.

Through the Council, in April 2016, Lt. Governor Polito announced new policies to target human trafficking, which included the formation of a High Risk Victims Unit within the Massachusetts State Police, and improved interagency coordination and communication between MSP and DCF. Additionally, as a part of the Administration's reforms at DCF, sexual exploitation and trafficking are now reportable conditions regardless of whether the perpetrator is a caregiver. Governor Baker also signed Executive Order 568 "Establishing Zero Tolerance Policy for Human Trafficking and Related Activities."

The programs funded through this grant will build upon the foundation established by the 5-year [Massachusetts Child Welfare Trafficking Grant](#) that was awarded to the Justice Resource Institute in 2014 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families' Children's Bureau. This grant led to the creation of [Children's Advocacy Center-based Child Sexual Exploitation Multidisciplinary Teams in each county, and supported each county in developing a](#)

[Child Trafficking Response Protocol](#). The Massachusetts Children's Alliance will work to engage the Multidisciplinary Teams and Child Advocacy Centers across the state around the ongoing grant-funded work.

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